

BEST PRACTICE DEMOCRACY IN FULL FLIGHT AT 2014 CONSTITUTION DEBATE.

My heartfelt thanks for this government of my choice, standing firm and reaching for the goal of "Best Practice Democracy". The debate Monday 11th of August was most educational and will be remembered in history as the turning point in our Nation's quest to forever change the practice and art of politics in my beloved Trinidad and Tobago.

The opposition's arguments were very useful in illuminating the kind of thinking, I hope we as a people never have to live with again as Government. Allowing freedom of choice to her Cabinet Members should have been enough to signal top class managing of human resources and although there were 2 dissenting voices from within, "Best Practice Democracy" prevailed.

Paradoxically, I viewed with delight and dismay, the contribution for the Member for Port of Spain South, which started with a boast of the PNM having a history of political activity for 58 years and confirming that to date there is no Code of Ethics and/or Job Specification for Members of Parliament., so that the "Run Off" proposal is doomed to fail.

There was no acceptance that the door has now been opened by a forward thinking, beautiful woman to have that accomplished and no attempt to add amendments to have that done. Who wants to vote for that thinking is guaranteed by the Constitution to so do in 2015.

In addition, analysing the voting patterns for the last 30 years, we have shown a reluctance by the electorate and constituents to participate fully in this most important and bloodily fought for right to vote.

That open door for change in the way we quantify and qualify the performance of our Members of Parliament, also gives us the opportunity to provide MP's with the human and financial resources to adequately serve their Constituencies.

A Research Officer, an Office Manager and a Secretary is not enough, especially where the Constituency a very large one and may have 3 Town Centers as is Mayaro, with Rio Claro, Mayaro and Biche.

Having served as the Personal Assistant to a Minister of Government and Member of Parliament, the glaring need for an Attorney -at- Law in each Constituency, alongside a Chauffeur and Parliament vehicle to service the many outreaches and in-reaches is required. If we are going to codify and specify what is required of Members of Parliament, my 4 years and 3 months of experience demands that this addition to all Constituencies is provided for in our Budget in September 2014.

Attention also has to be placed in preparing the Support Staff of Ministers and Members of Parliament to become the true challenge they can be when faced with subtle and sometimes blatant partisan politics from entrenched professionals, in Ministries.

PS's must not deny Support Staff access to the in house Internet on the Smart Phones or demand that they either have a Desktop Computer or Laptop for their use not both, so working outside with your Minister or Member of Parliament is difficult.

I am now being offered a Contract for the final 2 years to serve my Minister and although Section 85 of the Constitution dictates the relationship of Ministers with Permanent Secretaries, the Contract first handed to me does not acknowledge this critical fact.

Sad to say these kinds of examples, intentional or negligent, if pursued will lead to resignation of loyal citizens of Trinidad and Tobago.

There is so much more we can achieve before government is tasked with the Election Process, my sincere best wishes forward.

Knowledge Is Power: Sharing It Is Love.

Donald Berment, Housing Specialist/NGA/DVC.

August 2014.